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SUBJECT: WFP PLANS TO ASSIST THE AFGHAN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION SECTOR - THE NEXT EMERGENCY OPERATION (EMOP) APPEAL APRIL-DECEMBER 2002

REF: (A) ROME 6582

SUMMARY

1. AS A MAJOR COMPONENT OF ITS NEXT EMERGENCY (EMOP) OPERATION APPEAL (FROM APRIL THROUGH DECEMBER 2002), WFP IS PLANNING FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR 270,000 PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS, FOOD AID FOR TRAINING 50,000 TEACHERS, ASSISTANCE TO 75,000 ENROLLED IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES, AND FOOD-FOR-WORK FOR 80,000 ENGAGED IN EDUCATION-RELATED ASSET CREATION IN AFGHANISTAN. IN THE MEDIUM-LONG TERM, FOOD FOR EDUCATION IS INCREASINGLY ENVISIONED AS WFP'S "NICHE" IN ASSISTING AFGHANISTAN'S DEVELOPMENT. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

2. USMISSION HUMANITARIAN ATTACHE AND SENIOR EMERGENCY COORDINATOR SPOKE ON DECEMBER 28 WITH ARLENE MITCHELL, WFP'S COORDINATOR FOR THE GLOBAL FOOD FOR EDUCATION INITIATIVE. SHE RELATED DETAILS OF HER MID-DECEMBER TRIP TO PAKISTAN TO REVIEW CURRENT AND POTENTIAL WFP INVOLVEMENT IN THE AFGHAN EDUCATION SECTOR.

3. MITCHELL REFERRED REPEATEDLY TO A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION SECTOR ASSESSMENT "EFA 2000 AFGHANISTAN" CONDUCTED BY UNESCO, IN COOPERATION WITH UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, SAVE THE CHILDREN (USA) AND THE SWEDISH COMMITTEE FOR AFGHANISTAN, WHICH PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING "DIRE" END OF DECADE EDUCATION SCENARIO FOR AFGHNISTAN:

A. THE NUMBER OF SCHOOLS HAS HALVED IN THE PAST TWENTY YEARS. IN 1990, ALL PROVINCES HAD SCHOOLS; IN 1995, NINE OF AFGHANISTAN'S TWENTY-NINE PROVINCES HAD NONE. EVEN THOUGH PRIMARY EDUCATION WAS OFFICIALLY MADE COMPULSORY IN 1964, "SERIOUS IMPLEMENTATION HAS NOT OCCURRED."

B. GIRL'S EDUCATION HAS BEEN SEVERELY COMPROMISED. IN 1978, AT THE TIME OF THE SOVIET INVASION, THE GROSS ENROLLMENT RATE (GER) WAS CALCULATED AT 8 PERCENT FOR GIRLS AND 37 PERCENT FOR BOYS. IN 2000, THE GER STOOD AT 3 PERCENT FOR GIRLS AND 39 PERCENT FOR BOYS. AT PRESENT, GIRL'S SCHOOLS REPRESENT ONLY 14.9 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN THE COUNTRY.

C. ESTIMATED DATA AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL (UNICEF, 1998) LIST APPROXIMATELY 4.4 MILLION CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE. OF THIS, SOME 3.4 MILLION, 2 MILLION GIRLS AND 1.4 MILLION BOYS, DO NOT ATTEND SCHOOL.

D. IN 1978, THE AFGHAN TEACHING CADRE WAS ESTIMATED AT 30,502. IN 2000, THE NUMBER DROPPED TO 27,230, OF WHOM 10 PERCENT ARE WOMEN. THE PERCENTAGE OF PRIMARY TEACHERS WITH REQUIRED ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS IS NOW ESTIMATED AT 18.3 PERCENT. PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING HAS BEEN SEVERELY REDUCED OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS, AND ADJUDGED ALMOST "NON-EXISTENT" IN 2000.

F. THE PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT "SURVIVAL RATE" TO GRADE FIVE IS 48.8 PERCENT.

G. 69.5 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE ARE ILLITERATE, WITH THE PERCENTAGE OF ILLITERACY FOR WOMEN ESTIMATED AT 85 PERCENT. THIS CONTRASTS WITH SOUTH ASIA AS A WHOLE WHERE TWO-THIRDS OF THE WOMEN ARE ILLITERATE, COMPARED WITH ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE MEN.

H. PRE-SCHOOLS: AFGHANISTAN HAD AN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AS FAR BACK AS 1980. 195 DAY-CARE CENTERS WERE IN EXISTENCE IN 1990. IN 1999, THIS NUMBER HAD DROPPED TO ONE.

WFP'S PLANNED SUPPORT TO THE AFGHAN EDUCATION SECTOR FOR 2002 AND BEYOND - WFP'S NEXT EMOP APPEAL (APRIL -DECEMBER 2002)

4. MITCHELL COMMENTED THAT ALTHOUGH THE CURRENT SITUATION CALLS FOR AN IMMEDIATE EFFORT TO GET CHILDREN AND ADULTS EDUCATED (ADULTS THROUGH THE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION VENUE),

THE SITUATION WITH THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER PARTNERS COMBINED WITH THE ON-THE-GROUND DIFFICULTIES OF WORKING IN AFGHANISTAN - CONSTITUTE FORMIDABLE IMPEDIMENTS TO ANY MAJOR EFFORT. WFP THEREFORE PROPOSES TO BUILD ON ITS PAST EXPERIENCE (IN SELECTED DISTRICTS OF BADAKSHAN PROVINCE) IN A PHASED MANNER NATIONALLY FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2002-DECEMBER 2002, AS FOLLOWS:

1A. FOOD FOR EDUCATION FOR 270,000 STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND SCHOOL SERVICE WORKERS TO ENCOURAGE ENROLMENT, GOOD ATTENDANCE, LOWER THE DROP OUT RATE, AND ENHANCE IN-SCHOOL PERFORMANCE. WHERE NECESSARY, TAKE HOME RATIONS MAY BE PROVIDED AS AN ECONOMIC INCENTIVE FOR FAMILIES TO SEND CHILDREN TO SCHOOL. AT THE OUTSET, WFP PLANS TO RESPOND FLEXIBLY AT URBAN AND RURAL LOCATIONS AND AT BOTH THE SECONDARY AND PRIMARY LEVELS. (WITHIN TWO-THREE YEARS, THE EMPHASIS WILL BE INCREASINGLY ON PRIMARY AND RURAL SCHOOLS.)

1B. TEACHER TRAINING - WFP WILL PROVIDE FOOD TO SUPPORT THE TRAINING AND RETRAINING OF UP TO 50,000 FORMER TEACHERS, TEACHER CANDIDATES, AND CURRENT TEACHERS. MITCHELL SPOKE OF POSSIBLE UN PROMOTION OF A "TEACHER TRAINING CORPS," DRAWING ON A CADRE OF TEACHER VOLUNTEERS FROM THE CENTRAL ASIA REGION OR BEYOND.

1C. NON-FORMAL EDUCATION - FOOD AID WILL BE PROVIDED TO UP TO 75,000 YOUTHS AND ADULTS WHO REQUIRE LITERACY AND SKILLS TRAINING.

1D. FOOD-FOR-WORK/FOOD ASSET CREATION - FOOD AID WILL BE PROVIDED FOR UP TO 80,000 BENEFICIARIES/MONTH. WFP WILL WORK WITH COMMUNITIES TO BUILD OR REBUILD SCHOOLS AND RELATED SANITARY FACILITIES, AND TO ESTABLISH INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES RELATED TO EDUCATION. IN PARTICULAR, WFP PLANS TO IMPLEMENT COMMUNITY-BASED BREAD BAKERIES TO SUPPLY SCHOOLS DAILY WITH FORTIFIED BREAD. THIS WOULD GENERATE JOBS, PARTICULARLY FOR WOMEN, BY PROVIDING A READY "MARKET".

COMMENT

15. GIVEN ITS MASSIVE FOOD AID FLOWS IN RESPONSE TO THE PRESENT CRISIS, WFP IS NATIONALLY THE MOST OPERATIONAL UN AGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN. WFP HAS PREVIOUS (AND FAVORABLE) EXPERIENCE IN SCHOOL FEEDING IN BOTH NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN AND A HEAVY INVOLVEMENT IN THE U.S.-LED GLOBAL FOOD FOR EDUCATION INITIATIVE (REF A). WFP FEELS THAT ITS MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM "NICHE" IN AFGHANISTAN OVER THE NEXT ONE-TWO DECADES WILL BE TIGHTLY LINKED TO FOOD FOR EDUCATION. CLEARLY THE NEED IS THERE. WHAT IS NOW REQUIRED IS THE DELICATE TASK OF: (A) OBTAINING THE AGREEMENT OF THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT THAT WFP'S APPROACH WILL SUPPORT THEIR PRIORITIES AND NEEDS; AND (B) "CONCRETIZING" THE COOPERATION OF WFP'S IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS. THE RELATIVELY SHORT-TERM (I.E., NINE-MONTH) FOCUS OF THE PROPOSED EMOP SHOULD GIVE WFP A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO "FURTHER TEST THE EDUCATIONAL WATERS."

16. DUSHANBE MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. HEILEMAN